

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of operating a communications system comprising a packet-switched network, a circuit-switched network, a plurality of gateways connecting the circuit-switched network to the packet-switched network, ~~the~~ said method comprising:
 - a) receiving packet traffic at one of the gateways;
 - b) establishing in the circuit-switched network a circuit from ~~the~~ said one gateway to a node on the circuit-switched network; ~~and~~
 - c) outputting the said packet traffic from ~~the~~ said one gateway onto the circuit of the circuit-switched network; ~~characterised by~~
 - d) outputting, from a plurality of gateways, polling messages addressed to the destination address of the packet traffic;
 - e) receiving at the gateways replies from the destination address;
 - f) determining ~~the~~ respective delays for the replies at ~~the~~ different ~~respective~~ gateways;
 - g) selecting one of the gateways depending on the respective delay times; and
 - h) establishing ~~the~~ a virtual circuit to the gateway selected in step (g).

2. (Currently Amended) A method ~~according to~~as in claim 1, in which the circuit-switched network includes a plurality of independently controlled networks and different ones of the plurality of gateways are connected to different respective ones of the plurality of networks.

3. (Currently Amended) A method ~~according to~~as in claim 1, in which at least one ~~or more~~ of the gateways communicate a respective delay time to a control node and the step of selecting one of the gateways is carried out by the control node.

4. (Currently Amended) A method ~~according to~~as in claim 3, in which only the ~~or~~ each gateway having a respective delay value less than a threshold value communicates ~~the~~its delay value to the control node.

5. (Currently Amended) A method ~~according to~~as in claim 1 in which the packets are Internet Protocol (IP) packets.

6. (Currently Amended) A method ~~according to~~as in claim 1 in which the circuit-switched network is an ATM (asynchronous transfer mode) network.

7. (Currently Amended) A control node for use in a method ~~according to~~as in claim 1, the control node including a control processor and a signalling interface, which signalling interface, in use, communicates signals with a plurality of gateways in a circuit-switched network, the control processor being arranged to carry out the following steps in sequence:

a) communicating instructions to the plurality of gateways to transmit polling messages to a destination address in a circuit-switched network connected to the gateways;

b) receiving from the plurality of gateways indications of respective delays in responses to the polling messages; and

c) selecting, depending on the respective delays, one of the gateways as the end-point of a virtual circuit.

8. (Currently Amended) A gateway for use in a method ~~according to~~ as in claim 1, the gateway including a first interface for connection to a packet-switched network, a second interface for connection to a circuit-switched network, and a control processor including a control interface arranged to communicate control signals with a control node, the control processor being arranged to carry out the following steps in sequence:

a) in response to a control message from the control mode transmitting a polling message to a destination address in the circuit-switched network;

b) receiving a reply from the destination address and determining the delay of the reply; and

c) communicating the reply to the control node.

9. (Currently Amended) A communications network including a control node ~~according to~~ as in claim 7 and a gateway ~~comprising~~ including a first interface for connection to a packet-switched network, a second interface for connection to a circuit-switched network, and a control processor including a control interface arranged to communicate control signals with a control node, the control processor being arranged to carry out the following steps in sequence:

a) in response to a control message form the control mode transmitting a polling message to a destination address in the circuit-switched network;

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- b) receiving a reply from the destination address and determining the delay of the
reply; and
- c) communicating the reply to the control node.